THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) As on 1st November, 2004 a total stock of 109.99 lakh MT of foodgrains was available with the FCI out of which the stock of 57,560 MT offoodgrains was more than three years old. These old stocks represent only 0.63 percent of the total foodgrains stocks of the FCI.

(b) to (d) The old stocks of foodgrains are already being issued on priority under the First In First Out (FIFO) principle against various allocations for the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and Welfare Schemes to States/UTs.

Strengthening TPDS

897. SHRIMATI S.G. INDIRA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had taken a decision to strengthen the Targeted Public Distribution System;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the States have been asked to first procure and distribute foodgrains locally and then contribute the surplus to the Central Pool;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government had accepted all the recommendations of an earlier meet of State Food Ministers; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The scheme of Decentralized Procurement of foodgrains was introduced by the Government in 1997-98. Under the Decentralized Procurement scheme, the State Governments procure, store and distribute foodgrains under TPDS and other welfare schemes. The surplus foodgrains are transferred in the Central Pool.

The State Government of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat hnve been undertaking Decentralized Procurement.

(d) and (e) As per the recommendations of the State Food Minister's Conference held on 28.10.2004 all the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been instructed to ensure that all families at the risk of hunger are covered by the System, the migrant labour or displaced persons or homeless population should be issued ration entitlement authority slips etc. Steps to improve the economic viability of ration shops, to facilitate and encourage Decentralized Procurement of foodgrains so as to make the PDS more cost effective and to cater to local tastes and better monitoring of the System were recommended. As per the same recommendations referred to above, the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been advised that cooperatives of Women and Ex-servicemen should be given priority in the matter of allotting fair price shops licenses.

Consumer policy

898. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to introduce new consumer policy in view of the changing consumerism in the country; and

(b) if so, when it will be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) Yes Sir. The Central Government has constituted a Working group on 26.2.2004 under the ChairpersOnship of Principal Secretary, Co-operation, Food and Consumer Protection, Government of Tamil Nadu. The working group consists of Secretary-in-charge of Consumer Affairs, to the Government of States of Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and representatives of Voluntary Consumer Organisations. The working group has already started its consultations and it is yet to finalise its recommendations on National Consumer policy.

(b)Afterthe receipt of recommendations of the working group, action, required for its implementation will be taken.